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ABSTRACT

Nearly 3 out of 5 students (58 percent) who were 16 years old when the 1997-98 school year began worked for an employer at some point during the academic year. Findings were from the second round of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997, a nationally representative sample of about 9,000 young men and women born during 1980-84. Respondents were ages 12-17 when first interviewed in 1997 and 13-19 when interviewed in 1998-99. Their employment experiences during the school year and summer were divided into the following two categories: "employee" jobs, in which youths have an ongoing relationship with a particular employer; and "freelance" jobs, e.g. babysitting or yard work. Even at ages younger than 16, working during the academic year was common; 18 percent of those age 14 at the beginning of the 1997-98 school year worked in an employee job at some point during the school year; for those age 15 at the beginning of the school year, just under 40 percent worked at an employee job; from age 14 to 16, youths worked more in employee jobs and less in freelance jobs; females were much less likely than males to hold an employee job while 14 or 15; females and males were about equally likely to hold an employee job while age 16; and a majority of 12- and 13-year-olds engaged in some work activity. (A technical note describes the sample, provides definitions, and presents four tables and a graph illustrating survey results.) (YLB)

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# Employment Experience of Youths: Results from a Longitudinal Survey

United States Department of Labor
Bureau of Labor Statistics

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# EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE OF YOUTHS: RESULTS FROM A LONGITUDINAL SURVEY

Working while in school is the norm among older high school students. Nearly three out of every five students (58 percent) who were 16 years old when the 1997-98 school year began worked for an employer at some point during the academic year, according to a survey from the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor.

These findings are from the second round of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997, a nationally representative sample of about 9,000 young men and women who were born during the years 1980 to 1984. These respondents were ages 12 to 17 when first interviewed in 1997 and ages 13 to 19 when interviewed a second time in 1998-99. The survey provides information on the employment experiences, schooling, family background, social behavior, and other characteristics of these youths.

This release focuses on the employment experiences of these youths both during the school year and the summer. The survey divides work into two categories: "employee" jobs, in which youths have an on-going relationship with a particular employer, such as a restaurant or supermarket; and "freelance" jobs, where the youth is doing one or a few tasks for several people but has no "boss." Examples of freelance jobs are babysitting or yard work. Highlights from the longitudinal survey include:

- Almost 60 percent of students who were age 16 at the beginning of the 1997-98 school year worked at an employee job at some time during that academic year.
- Even at younger ages, working during the academic year is common. Eighteen percent of those who were age 14 at the beginning of the 1997-98 school year worked in an employee job at some point during the school year. For those who were age 15 at the beginning of the school year, just under 40 percent worked at an employee job.
- From age 14 to age 16, youths move toward more formal work arrangements, working more in employee jobs and less in freelance jobs.
- Female youths were much less likely than male youths to hold an employee job at some point while age 14 or 15. However, female and male youths were about equally likely to hold an employee job while age 16.
- A majority of 12- and 13-year-olds engaged in some type of work activity. Babysitting was the predominant activity of working female youths at these ages, while yard work was the most common employment activity for male youths.



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Employment During the 1997-98 School Year and the Following Summer in Employee Jobs

Working while in school was common among high school students during the 1997-98 school year. Moreover, the percent of enrolled youths who worked at an employee job at some point during the school year is substantially higher at each successive age. (See table 1.) The percent of enrolled youths who worked in an employee job during the 1997-98 academic year ranged from 18 percent for youths age 14 at the beginning of the school year, to 39 percent for those who were age 15, to 58 percent for those who were age 16.

Even at these relatively young ages, youths enrolled in school began forming strong, year-round attachments to the formal labor market. Forty-five percent of working youths age 14 at the beginning of the school year worked both during the school year and the following summer, as did 58 percent of working youths age 15 and 70 percent of working youths age 16.

Male youths age 14 at the start of the fall school term were much more likely than same-aged female youths to work at an employee job at some point during the school year. By age 16, however, this gender differential had been erased.

A different measure of youth employment during the 1997-98 school year and the following summer is the percent of enrolled youths working each week. (See chart.) For all three age cohorts, the week-by-week incidence of employment remained stable between September and February, increased noticeably in the spring school term, and accelerated in early summer to a peak in mid-summer.

The percent of youths working during a given school week in the fall semester was twice as large at age 15 as at age 14 and twice as large at age 16 as at age 15. Nearly 10 percent of youths age 14 at the start of the 1997-98 school year worked during a typical week in the fall semester, as did almost 20 percent of youths age 15. Close to 40 percent of enrolled youths who were age 16 at the beginning of the school year worked during any given school week in the fall term.

Work Activity of Youths While Ages 14, 15, and 16

Eighty percent of youths worked in some capacity while age 16, that is, between their 16th and 17th birthdays. (See table 2.) This compares with 67 percent of youths who worked at some point while age 15. Moreover, youths increasingly entered formal work arrangements, working more in employee jobs and less in freelance jobs. While one-fourth of youths worked in an employee job while age 14, two-thirds worked in an employee job while age 16. Comparatively, the percent of youths who worked at freelance jobs ranged from 48 percent while age 14 to 35 percent while age 16.

Older youths were not only more likely to work in employee jobs, but when they did work, they also worked more weeks. While age 16, youths worked in employee jobs an average of 28 weeks, compared with an average of 23 weeks for employed 14-year-olds. (See table 3.)

Female youths were less likely than male youths to hold an employee job while either age 14 or 15 but were nearly as likely to hold an employee job at age 16. Male and female youths of the same age worked similar numbers of weeks per year.

Differences in employment activities are apparent by race and ethnic group. While age 14, 29 percent of whites held an employee job, compared with 18 percent of both blacks and Hispanics. The percent of blacks and Hispanics who worked at an employee job was twice as large at age 16 as at age 15; however, the percent of blacks and Hispanics who worked at employee jobs while age 16 remained well below that of their white counterparts. When employed, blacks and Hispanics worked fewer weeks than whites.

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While age 16, employed white youths averaged 30 weeks of work, black youths averaged 25 weeks of work, and Hispanic youths averaged 24 weeks.

Work Activity of Youths While Ages 12 and 13

Experience with the world of work starts at young ages. Half (50 percent) of youths engaged in some work activity while age 12, and 53 percent reported work activity while age 13. (See table 4.) Most of these very young workers did babysitting or yard work. Among female youths who worked at these ages, over 85 percent reported working as a babysitter. Among working male youths, over 60 percent did some type of yard work.

# Technical Note

The estimates in this release were obtained using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97). The NLSY97 is the newest survey in the National Longitudinal Surveys program. The NLSY97 collects extensive information on youths' labor market behavior and educational experiences. Information about respondents' families and communities also is obtained in the survey.

This survey is conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago and the Center for Human Resource Research at The Ohio State University, under the direction and sponsorship of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor. Partial funding support for the survey is provided by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention of the Department of Justice, the National School to Work Office of the Departments of Education and Labor, and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development of the Department of Health and Human Services.

## Sample

The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 is a nationally representative sample of 8,984 young men and women who were ages 12 to 16 on December 31, 1996. This sample is composed of two subsamples: a cross-sectional sample designed to represent the noninstitutionalized, civilian segment of young people living in the U.S. in 1997 and born between January 1, 1980, and December 31, 1984; and a supplemental sample of youths designed to oversample Hispanic and black youths living in the U.S. in 1997 and born between January 1, 1980, and December 31, 1984. The second round of annual interviews took place between November 1, 1998, and May 1, 1999, and all results are weighted using the second-round survey weights that correct for oversampling and nonresponse. When weighted, the data represent all Americans living in the U.S. in 1997 and born in the years 1980 to 1984.

## Definitions

*1997-98 School year and following summer.* The school term is defined as the period from September 1997 through May 1998. The summer is composed of June, July, and August of 1998.

*Enrolled.* Individuals were not considered enrolled if they received a high school diploma before April 1998 or if they were not enrolled for a period of two or more consecutive months during the school year.

*Freelance job.* A freelance job involves doing one or a few tasks without a specific "boss," like babysitting or mowing lawns, or working for oneself.

*Employee job.* An employee job is one in which the youth has an on-going relationship with a particular employer, such as working in a supermarket or restaurant.

The respondent is read the following introduction prior to survey questions about freelance and employee jobs:

"We are going to discuss two sorts of jobs with you. We'll call one type working as a freelancer or being self-employed, that is, working one or a few tasks for several people and not having a 'boss' (for example, babysitting or mowing lawns) or working for yourself (for example, running a business)."

"We'll refer to the second type as working as an employee: that is, you had an on-going relationship with a particular employer (for example, working in a supermarket or restaurant, or being in the military)."

*Work activities while ages 12 or 13.* The NLSY97 asked a different set of questions of youths who were ages 12 or 13 as of the date of the first interview. These questions determined whether the respondents had held "any jobs" since their 12th birthday and did not distinguish between freelance and employee work arrangements. In the second round, youths were asked about work experience since the date of the last interview.

*Age categories.* "While age x" refers to the entire year between birthday "x" and the following birthday. The estimates shown in this release for each age category exclude respondents who had not yet reached their next birthday at the time of the interview—and thus were not able to provide the full year's worth of information for that age. For example, "While age 14" refers to the entire year between an individual's 14th and 15th birthdays. The category excludes individuals who had not yet turned age 15 at the time of the interview.

*Race and Hispanic origin.* In this release, the findings are reported for non-Hispanic whites, non-Hispanic blacks, and Hispanics. These groups are mutually exclusive but not exhaustive. Other race groups, which are included in the overall totals, are not shown separately because their representation in the survey sample is not sufficiently large to provide statistically reliable estimates. In other BLS publications, estimates are published for whites, blacks, and Hispanics, but these groups usually are not mutually exclusive. The term "Hispanic" is considered to be an ethnic group, and Hispanics can be of any race. Most other BLS publications include estimates for Hispanics in the white and black race groups in addition to the Hispanic ethnic group.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory-impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; TDD message referral phone: 1-800-877-8339.



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**Table 1. Percent of enrolled youths with an employee job during the 1997-98 school year and the following summer by age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, grade in school, and timing of employment**

| Age as of September 1, 1997, and characteristic | Percent of students who ever worked during the school year and following summer | Percent who worked during school year | | | Percent who worked during summer only |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Total | Worked during school year and summer | Worked during school year only | |
| Total, age 14 | 33.4 | 18.3 | 15.1 | 3.2 | 15.1 |
| Male youths | 39.2 | 21.8 | 17.3 | 4.5 | 17.4 |
| Female youths | 27.3 | 14.7 | 12.8 | 1.9 | 12.6 |
| White | 38.3 | 22.4 | 18.8 | 3.6 | 15.9 |
| Black | 22.5 | 9.3 | 6.9 | 2.4 | 13.2 |
| Hispanic origin | 24.3 | 12.9 | 10.0 | 2.9 | 11.4 |
| Grade 8 | 28.8 | 12.3 | 10.1 | 2.2 | 16.5 |
| Grade 9 | 35.7 | 20.4 | 16.8 | 3.6 | 15.3 |
| Total, age 15 | 60.1 | 39.0 | 34.7 | 4.2 | 21.1 |
| Male youths | 62.4 | 41.5 | 37.6 | 3.9 | 20.9 |
| Female youths | 57.5 | 36.1 | 31.5 | 4.6 | 21.4 |
| White | 65.0 | 42.3 | 37.9 | 4.4 | 22.7 |
| Black | 47.6 | 30.5 | 27.5 | 2.9 | 17.2 |
| Hispanic origin | 54.1 | 36.2 | 31.1 | 5.1 | 17.9 |
| Grade 9 | 54.9 | 33.9 | 29.1 | 4.8 | 21.0 |
| Grade 10 | 63.3 | 41.1 | 36.9 | 4.2 | 22.2 |
| Total, age 16 | 73.9 | 58.4 | 51.8 | 6.5 | 15.5 |
| Male youths | 74.6 | 56.8 | 49.9 | 6.9 | 17.8 |
| Female youths | 73.1 | 59.9 | 53.7 | 6.2 | 13.2 |
| White | 79.8 | 64.5 | 57.9 | 6.7 | 15.3 |
| Black | 59.4 | 45.4 | 38.9 | 6.5 | 14.0 |
| Hispanic origin | 62.8 | 43.4 | 36.5 | 7.0 | 19.3 |
| Grade 10 | 68.1 | 50.2 | 42.7 | 7.5 | 18.0 |
| Grade 11 | 78.2 | 63.3 | 56.5 | 6.8 | 14.9 |

NOTE: The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 consists of young men and women who were ages 12 to 16 on December 31, 1996. Race and Hispanic-origin groups are mutually exclusive but not exhaustive. Other race groups, which are included in the overall totals, are not shown separately because their representation in the survey sample is not sufficiently large to provide statistically reliable estimates. The school year is defined as September 1997 through May 1998, excluding the last full week of December 1997 and the first week of January 1998. Summer is defined as June, July, and August of 1998.

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**Table 2. Percent of youths employed while ages 14 to 16 in 1994-98 by age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, and type of job**

| Age in 1994-98 and characteristic | Percent employed in: | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Any job | Any employee job | Any freelance job | Employee jobs only | Freelance jobs only | Both employee and freelance jobs |
| Total, while age 14 | 61.2 | 25.1 | 47.6 | 13.6 | 36.2 | 11.5 |
| Male youths | 59.0 | 29.7 | 41.6 | 17.4 | 29.3 | 12.3 |
| Female youths | 63.5 | 20.2 | 53.9 | 9.5 | 43.3 | 10.6 |
| White | 68.6 | 28.8 | 53.8 | 14.8 | 39.9 | 13.9 |
| Black | 46.5 | 17.5 | 35.3 | 11.2 | 29.0 | 6.3 |
| Hispanic origin | 44.7 | 17.9 | 33.7 | 11.0 | 26.9 | 6.8 |
| Total, while age 15 | 66.5 | 38.5 | 43.4 | 23.1 | 28.0 | 15.4 |
| Male youths | 65.5 | 42.4 | 37.1 | 28.4 | 23.1 | 14.1 |
| Female youths | 67.6 | 34.4 | 50.0 | 17.5 | 33.2 | 16.9 |
| White | 74.5 | 44.5 | 49.0 | 25.5 | 30.0 | 19.0 |
| Black | 49.2 | 26.0 | 31.5 | 17.7 | 23.1 | 8.4 |
| Hispanic origin | 50.0 | 26.4 | 31.6 | 18.4 | 23.6 | 8.0 |
| Total, while age 16 | 80.1 | 66.9 | 35.4 | 44.7 | 13.1 | 22.3 |
| Male youths | 80.1 | 68.7 | 29.6 | 50.5 | 11.4 | 18.2 |
| Female youths | 80.1 | 65.2 | 41.5 | 38.6 | 14.9 | 26.6 |
| White | 87.2 | 73.8 | 40.2 | 47.0 | 13.4 | 26.8 |
| Black | 62.4 | 51.3 | 23.4 | 39.0 | 11.1 | 12.3 |
| Hispanic origin | 66.0 | 54.5 | 24.5 | 41.6 | 11.5 | 13.0 |

NOTE: The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 consists of young men and women who were ages 12 to 16 on December 31, 1996. Race and Hispanic-origin groups are mutually exclusive but not exhaustive. Other race groups, which are included in the overall totals, are not shown separately because their representation in the survey sample is not sufficiently large to provide statistically reliable estimates.



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**Table 3. Percent of youths ages 14 to 16 in 1994-98 with an employee job and average number of weeks worked, by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin**

| Age in 1994-98 and characteristic | Percent with an employee job | Average number of weeks worked |
|---|---|---|
| Total, while age 14 | 25.1 | 22.9 |
| Male youths | 29.7 | 23.3 |
| Female youths | 20.2 | 22.2 |
| White | 28.8 | 24.6 |
| Black | 17.5 | 15.9 |
| Hispanic origin | 17.9 | 17.9 |
| Total, while age 15 | 38.5 | 24.5 |
| Male youths | 42.4 | 25.6 |
| Female youths | 34.4 | 23.0 |
| White | 44.5 | 25.5 |
| Black | 26.0 | 20.1 |
| Hispanic origin | 26.4 | 20.7 |
| Total, while age 16 | 66.9 | 28.3 |
| Male youths | 68.7 | 27.9 |
| Female youths | 65.2 | 28.9 |
| White | 73.8 | 29.5 |
| Black | 51.3 | 24.6 |
| Hispanic origin | 54.5 | 24.3 |

NOTE: The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 consists of young men and women who were ages 12 to 16 on December 31, 1996. Race and Hispanic-origin groups are mutually exclusive but not exhaustive. Other race groups, which are included in the overall totals, are not shown separately because their representation in the survey sample is not sufficiently large to provide statistically reliable estimates.

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**Table 4. Percent of youths ages 12 to 13 in 1995-98 who were engaged in work activities, by age, sex, race, Hispanic origin, and type of job**

| Age in 1995-98 and characteristic | Percent with a work activity | Percent with a work activity engaged in: | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Babysitting | Yard work |
| Total, while age 12 | 50.3 | 54.0 | 39.7 |
| Male youths | 49.5 | 23.5 | 64.7 |
| Female youths | 51.2 | 86.0 | 13.6 |
| White | 56.6 | 53.3 | 40.5 |
| Black | 39.5 | 48.4 | 38.8 |
| Hispanic origin | 35.8 | 60.0 | 30.4 |
| Total, while age 13 | 53.0 | 60.1 | 34.7 |
| Male youths | 48.7 | 28.1 | 62.8 |
| Female youths | 57.6 | 88.7 | 9.5 |
| White | 61.4 | 59.8 | 35.5 |
| Black | 38.1 | 53.9 | 36.5 |
| Hispanic origin | 36.6 | 61.6 | 26.2 |

NOTE: The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 consists of young men and women who were ages 12 to 16 on December 31, 1996. Race and Hispanic-origin groups are mutually exclusive but not exhaustive. Other race groups, which are included in the overall totals, are not shown separately because their representation in the survey sample is not sufficiently large to provide statistically reliable estimates.

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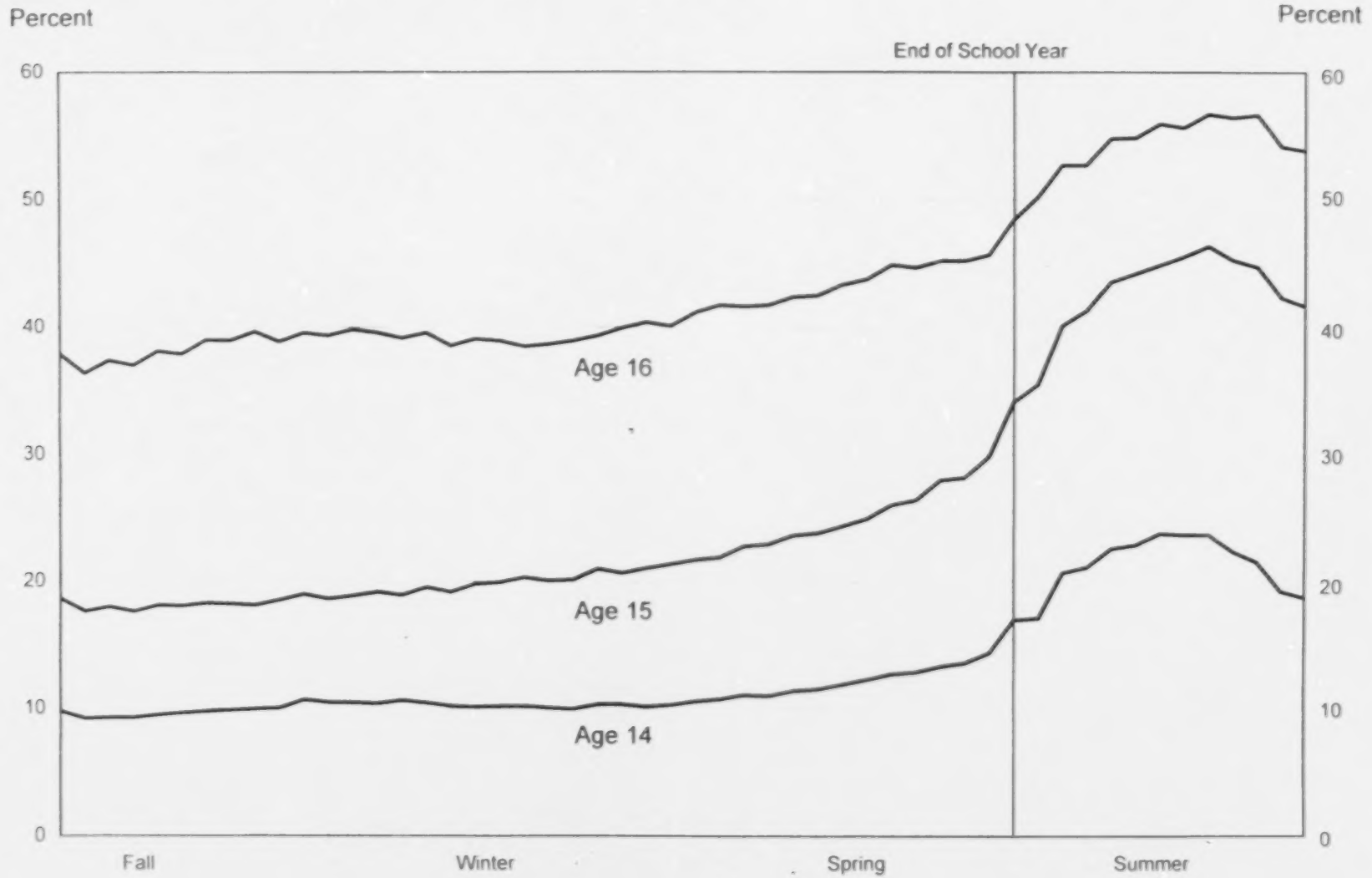
**Percent of enrolled youths working in employee jobs each week of the fall 1997 - spring 1998 school year and following summer by age on September 1, 1997**



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